



IT'S NOT JUST KNOWING; IT'S ABOUT GROWING

Week #16; Oct. 18, 2026, 11AM

Taught at: Ridgeview Classical Schools
1800 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins, CO
www.solidbreadcommunity.com

Review:

- In our last lesson two weeks ago, we wrapped up **Chapter 3 of 1 Thessalonians**. That lesson was called **“A Right Heart for God’s Followers.”**
- We learned what it means – and what it **really** looks like – when we say we love someone, when we say we care for them and are concerned for them.
- **It all comes down to what we do**, and in the closing verses of **Chapter 3**, we learned it means we PRAY for them - - and it means we pray for them a CERTAIN way.
- It’s our prayers that demonstrate **we truly have a right heart for God’s followers**. We learned **five things** that will show up in our prayers if we truly love, care for, and are concerned for others:
 1. We’ll have a heart that rejoices over their spiritual growth.
 2. We’ll have a heart that longs for their greater spiritual depth.
 3. We’ll have a heart that wants God’s will for them over our own plans.
 4. We’ll have a heart that wants their love to be expressed and to overflow.
 5. (Lastly) We’ll have a heart that wants their holiness considering Jesus’ return.
- The notes for that lesson – as well as the video for it – are already posted on our website and YouTube channel. You can review them there.

NOTE: This week, we begin **Chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians**, and I’ve called this one, **“It’s Not Just Knowing; it’s About Growing” (READ vss. 1-3a).**

- This is a passage about ‘sanctification.’ Paul is very clear in the opening phrase of **vs. 3**, *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.”*
- Well – if it’s God’s WILL, then we better figure out what that’s all about! None of us would want to be OUT of God’s will (would we?) – so what is *sanctification*?
- The word *sanctification* has a direct relationship with the word *saint*. Both of those words concern the issue of **holiness**, and that basically means to be set apart.
- Someone who is “sanctified” has been set apart for special use; they’ve been made holy for a purpose.
- **‘Sanctification’ is a process.** It’s not a button you push and you suddenly BECOME sanctified. It’s a continual process that moves you into a life that shows maturity in holiness. It doesn’t happen overnight, and it takes time, trials, and trouble.

- In **John 17:16-17**, Jesus is praying for us – for YOU, for ME. It is that time just before His arrest and betrayal, and He PRAYS for our greatest need – our greatest purpose.
- He prays His High Priestly Prayer, and He says about us, *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*
- Here’s a simple fact: we are not OF this world. There’s a lot of pressure on us to conform to this world and to embrace its values and its goals - - but IF we are truly IN CHRIST, then we are not OF this world, just the same way Jesus was not OF this world.
- **And it is truth from God’s Word that sanctifies us.** It is wisdom from God that separates us from the ideas and trappings of this world.
- That wisdom from God’s Word results in us becoming holy and set apart for something higher, better, and eternal.
- This is the essence of what Paul is writing about to these new Thessalonian believers. He tells them in **vs. 3a**, *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.”*
- Putting that another way to you and I, *“It is God’s will that we mature in the knowledge of Scripture, and that we **apply** what we know so we can GROW.”*
- There are a lot of people running around with a lot of head knowledge of the Bible. They’ve always got a verse to pop like a pill for every situation.
- They know doctrine, and they can discuss Scriptural issues with the best of them. But, when you get to KNOW them well, you realize quickly that it’s all ‘in their head.’
- None of what they know has resulted in their personal growth. These folks are often harsh, brittle, and prone to criticize or find fault.
- Many of them live their lives ‘checking the boxes’ of rituals and performances which make them feel good.
- “Safety in numbers” is a big deal to these folks because they are NOT about being ‘set apart.’ Instead, they are about fitting in and having the approval of others.
- And all this is because they’ve never really GROWN. They know a lot – but it’s made little difference in their lives. They’re ultimately more concerned about themselves and keeping the status quo than they are about others.
- **They’ve not really been ‘sanctified.’** They’re not really set apart. Much more than they are willing to admit, they’ve become conformed to this world.

IMPORTANT: One of the greatest indications of this dilemma is when these people push back on Biblical truth. As Jesus prayed, *“...your word is truth,”* but these folks struggle with this all-important fact.

- They want God’s Word to conform to their choices – rather than their choices conforming to God’s Word.
- They don’t pursue ‘holiness’ as they need to be doing because they’d rather **‘be a part’** than **‘be set apart.’**
- They really don’t want to be ‘sanctified.’ They’d have to give up too much if they were.

NOTE: Here, in **1 Thessalonians 4:1–3a**, we discover the Christian life is not only about starting well in Christ, but it's about continually growing in Christ. It's about maturing in God's Word and living in a manner that pleases Him and is conformed *"to His will."*

I have a simple outline today that is built around the letter "P." It's a three-part outline, and each point ties into this important issue of 'sanctification.' Each point teaches us something about being 'set apart' and becoming 'holy.'

- 1. The PRIORITY of sanctification.**
- 2. The PROGRESS of sanctification.**
- 3. The PROCESS of sanctification.**

A. The PRIORITY of sanctification

NOTE: (we see this in **vs. 1**): *"...we instructed you HOW to live in order to PLEASE God."*

1. I have two goals I want to emphasize here regarding the **priority** of sanctification.
 - God never calls us to spiritual complacency. The Christian life was never meant to relax on 'cruise control.'
2. And so, the **first goal** I want to emphasize here is **obedience**. This is a lifelong priority we should each have, and it is a very important one.
 - This is what Paul means when he mentions **how to live**. I don't think we consider this issue enough – but the simple fact is God calls us to obedience.
 - Remember.... **1 Cor. 6:19-20** reminds us that *"...you are not your own; you are bought with a price."*
 - We belong to God rather than ourselves or our friends, or our surrounding culture, or the world's ideas and values.
 - Jesus paid a price for us, and **as true believers** - we are no longer *"of this world"* as He prayed in His High Priestly Prayer.
 - And since we are not of this world, then we need to act differently than the world acts.
 - That means obeying - - and if we are truly obeying, then that means we are letting God's Word shape how we live. **God calls us to obedience.**
 - Living the Christian life means a whole lot more than the things you say, the things you talk about, or the things you profess to believe.
 - Talk is cheap. The Christian life is demonstrated by **how you live**. It shows up in your choices, in your actions, and in your attitudes.
 - It's taking the high road when you'd rather take the low one. It's keeping up your standards when you'd rather compromise. It's about showing self-control when you'd rather throw a fit.
 - It's knowing God is watching you ALL THE TIME, and you welcome His eyes on you that way because you know you are obeying Him.
 - It's about diligently reading and studying God's Word because your goal is to conform your life TO it. You know it's about what Jesus prayed, *"...your word is truth."*

- This is the first goal in the **priority of sanctification**. It's obedience. It about HOW we choose to live.
- And that first goal leads right into **the second goal**, and this second goal concerning the priority of sanctification is "...to *PLEASE* God." That is also in **vs. 1**.
 - Your walk matters to God. How you obey – or how or why you don't obey – is a BIG deal to God.
 - Your manner and style of life, your moral conduct, your values and choices - - these are all part of your walk - - YOUR journey.
 - And these things matter to God. That is why they should matter **to us**. That is why **pleasing God** should be the objective of **obedience**.
 - Our decisions should be governed by what pleases and honors the Lord rather than what satisfies ourselves, what impresses the crowd, or what conforms to others' expectations.

NOTE: Think about this simple question. If ALL your choices were made based on what **pleases** God, then how much would YOU change as a person from what you are now?

- **If you feel you would change a lot** – then you have a LOT of growing to do. You are pushing back on sanctification which is God's will for you.
- **If you feel you would change very little** – well then.....(let me just be honest), you're a lot farther along than me!
- I am far from the obedience I need to be exercising. I am nowhere close to the sanctification I need to be pursuing. I see so many ways I need to grow.

NOTE: Our faith – IF it is 'the real deal' - **must** influence our daily conduct. The Christian life cannot be quarantined from our attitudes, our relationships, our priorities, and our choices. We need to willfully live to **obey** and **please** God.

B. The PROGRESS of sanctification

NOTE: Paul states at the end of **vs. 1** "...to do this more and more."

1. As this lesson's title says, "It's not just knowing; it's about growing."

- Paul is making a point here about spiritual growth, because spiritual growth is what is expected.
 - The Christian walk can plateau at times – we've all been there. But we are not to STAY on that plateau. We are to grow.
 - In C.S. Lewis' book "The Last Battle" which was the last one in his "Chronicles of Narnia" series, the characters find themselves entering a new – a truer version of Narnia that is "bigger on the inside" and more real than the world they had left behind.
 - And Aslan urges them to go "*further up and further in.*" I believe in eternity, we will go "*further up and further in;*" we will never stop experiencing the infinite joy of our endless existence with Jesus Christ.

- But here on this fallen earth – and in our calling to **faithfully endure in one direction** – we still need to grow! That’s also part of the principle of *“further up and further in.”*
- There is no justification for living in the flatlands – for staying on a plateau in our Christian walk. We are to **grow**, we are to **progress**.
- Remember – Paul has been commending the Thessalonians for how they are living, for how they are holding up under trials, for how they are standing firm, for how they are demonstrating that they are truly saved, and for how they are obeying and pleasing God.
 - Yet - - he urges them to **continue growing**, *“more and more”* he says. Paul is urging them to avoid the plateaus of their faith.
 - I read a great quote: **“Yesterday’s obedience is not today’s finish line.”** You may have been faithful at some point in the past, but that is nothing to relax about or rest on.
 - Your previous victories in faithfulness should inspire you to go *“further up and further in.”*
 - Your **past** faithfulness should encourage your **further** faithfulness. Your growth should be ongoing! Today you woke up and put your feet on the floor. You need to do the same tomorrow.
 - Sanctification is a process, not a destination. It is not enough to merely exist as a Christian; we must always be moving toward excellence in our faith.
 - While you are on this fallen earth, there is always room to become more Christlike in your obedience, love, holiness, and service. There is always room to grow – to progress.

NOTE: Let me make a few comments about ‘complacency.’ This is one of the enemies of the **progress of sanctification**. We’ll be learning about some other enemies of sanctification next week.

- But for today - any environment, any relationship, any values, any choices, any routines or ideas that feed your complacency are working **AGAINST** your sanctification (and we’ve learned that sanctification is God’s will for us).
- It’s easy to fall into patterns and routines which make us **FEEL** like we are doing the right thing, but which ultimately do very little – if anything – for our **growth in Christ**.
- They are keeping our spiritual flames ‘on low.’ Sure, things are lit, but they’re not bright. We’re not giving off much heat. We’ve plateaued.
- We’re not making much of a difference for ourselves or anyone else - - and if we’re **REALLY** honest, we’ve been in that same spot for a long time.
- These are things that are keeping us from being victorious in our faith. They are preventing us from being ‘salt’ and ‘light,’ and they are keeping us timid and ineffective as we try to reach a lost world.

- I encourage you to closely examine ALL the things in your life, all the places you go, all the people you hang out with, all the schedules you keep, and all the things that are part of your weekly routines.
- I strongly encourage you to ask yourself if these things are truly helping you **progress in sanctification** - - or whether (be honest!) they are making you complacent in the same. If they are not helping you progress – then you need to make a change.

C. The **PROCESS** of sanctification

NOTE: Paul says in **vs. 2**, “...you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”

1. There is a **process** here that works for our sanctification. It’s adhering to Biblical truth. It’s esteeming and following the instructions of Scripture.
 - Paul did not say, “Respect me.” He did not elevate himself or his credentials in any way. This was not about Paul.
 - His instructions to these Thessalonian believers was based on “*the authority of the Lord Jesus*” as revealed in His Word.
 - The bottom line here is Biblical instruction establishes the standard we need to follow. That gives us “*the authority of the Lord Jesus.*”
 - Effective Christian living is not determined by living out our personal preferences, by conforming to cultural opinions, or by attending lukewarm ‘woke’ churches.
 - Paul’s operative point is God’s Word has divine authority. He reminds them that his instructions were given through the authority of the Lord Jesus.
 - If the Thessalonian believers were going to have any issue with what Paul had to tell them, then their issue was not really with Paul – it was with God.

NOTE: This last point underscores a **huge** problem in the greater church today. This is a **major** problem with most Christians today: they disrespect the “*authority of God’s Word.*”

- I don’t think I’m off the mark when I say most Christians today *pick and choose* what they want to receive as ‘Biblical truth.’
- They have become comfortable with making God’s Word conform to *their* lives and choices rather than the reverse.
- The Bible has become a relative agent to them. Partly why they ‘church hop’ as they do, or why they skirt a fuller commitment in their faith is so they can ‘preserve their exit options.’
- These folks want to keep buffer zones between themselves and the “*authority of God’s Word.*”
- They will ‘attend and commend’ a specific body of believers until they are confronted with truth from Scripture which they don’t like or don’t want.

- Because they want to be **comfortable** rather than be **convicted**, it's at that point they 'vote with their feet,' and they go elsewhere. They will repeat this again and again - - whenever it's needed.
- These are folks who have not done as Paul instructs here; they have not heeded instructions which are given *"by the authority of the Lord Jesus."*
- They will adhere to Biblical truth, they will esteem it and follow it - - but only to a point.
- If it confronts their choices, or who they want to be and what they want to believe, then they will disregard *"the authority of God's Word."*
- You don't need me to tell you this is a matter of 'mixed loyalties.' It indicates a BIG spiritual problem.
- As the Bible tells us, many will "follow Jesus" until it costs them too much, until they learn they need to change some priorities, or until the authoritative Word of God forces them to look into a mirror more honestly than they want to.
- One never becomes 'sanctified' if they are running away from the *'authority of God's Word,'* and if they are fleeing the accountabilities they most need.
- As I said at the beginning of this lesson: Knowledge must lead to obedience. Knowing what God commands is not the same as pleasing God by faithfully putting that knowledge into practice.

WRAPPING UP: Let me ask THREE probing questions that we all need to think about:

1. **"Am I merely familiar with God's Word (perhaps even 'knowledgeable'), or am I truly allowing it to govern my life?"** – Remember, the Pharisees were knowledgeable but they did not have a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't celebrate **knowing**; celebrate **growing**. Biblical truth should shape your behavior.
2. **"Where is God calling me to take my next steps in showing spiritual maturity?"** – If you feel like you are stuck in a rut of just 'going through the motions,' then ask yourself "Why?" God does not want you on that plateau, so why are you? I think if you are honest, you will know that you have decided to remain there by your choices.
3. **(Lastly) "Am I pleasing God?"** – This is a simple question, and it's easy to answer. If your answer is "No," then you'll know why that's your answer, and you know what you need to do about it. Every decision, every attitude, every goal, and every habit you have needs to be evaluated through the *"authority of God's Word."* That will tell you if you are pleasing God or not.

CONCLUSION:

Paul does not suggest in this opening portion of **Ch. 4** that the Thessalonians have failed. In fact, he's already told them otherwise. He's acknowledged they are already walking a path of "faithful endurance in one direction" - - in a way that pleases God.

But he challenges them to grow in what they are already doing more and more. This is what 'sanctification' and maturing in Christ is all about. We should be grateful for how far God's grace has brought us - yet we should be unwilling to settle for where we find ourselves.

The larger issue here is not simply the question, "Am I a Christian?" It is also this question, "Is my life increasingly reflecting the character and commands of the God I claim to follow?" We **MUST NOT** confuse spiritual activity with spiritual growth, Biblical knowledge with Biblical obedience, or yesterday's faithfulness with today's responsibility.

NEXT TIME: Paul further instructs these new believers concerning **sanctification**. He gives them very specific instructions about sexual impurity. We will learn some things that are uncomfortable, but they are part of 'sanctification,' and we need to know why.



**SOLID
BREAD**

Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

Solid Bread Community, PO Box 431, Windsor, CO 80550

Website: www.solidbreadcommunity.com

Email: connect@solidbreadcommunity.com

Please follow Solid Bread Community on Facebook and subscribe to our YouTube channel.